

C.I.H.S BULLETIN

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN IMMIGRATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AGM: Dave Bulloch Elected President

The 1999 Annual General Meeting was held November 9th at Immigration HQ in Ottawa with Al Gunn presiding in the absence of outgoing President Susan Burrows. An edited version of the President's Annual Report is below.

Dave Bulloch was elected President for the coming year, with all other members of the executive Committee and Board of Directors being re-elected.

President's Annual Report

As most of you have read in our Bulletin, our mid-summer disaster was the loss of our president, Susan Burrows, who was posted to Port of Spain. This is the second president we have lost in mid-term. I couldn't possibly miss her more than I do right now, believe me, and I am sure she knows how much we appreciate her dedication and the energy she put into her office as president.

Activities this year have been reported in the bulletin, however, this is a brief summary. In May we launched the publication of Bernard Brodie's book, entitled "*When do I get my visa?*" This effort was an unqualified success, as the bulk of the printing was sold. In June our annual informal dinner at "The Place Next Door" had the usual turnout. This year we had the pleasure of seeing Roger St. Vincent, who is one of the old timers retired and living in Slovenia.

At present, we are in a holding pattern, and hoping to find and elect a new president at this meeting. We are most anxious to encourage younger members, preferably among those who are still working, to join our executive, or board of directors. As an example of our problem, Al Troy and I have served on the board more years than we care to count and the ravages of age are beginning to show.

Most of our publications have been memoirs of officers who served in the pre- and post WWII. The latest refugee movement published was the exodus from Uganda. We need first hand accounts of the "boat people" from Vietnam, refugees from South and Central America, for example. These people were processed by younger FSO's and the stories of their experiences are needed. Personal accounts of survival through our countless reorganizations might well supplement official records.

In short we need the recent experiences of members and future members.

Our thanks to those who have contributed articles for the bulletin, as well as volunteers who have rendered valuable assistance at any of our gatherings. To paraphrase Dean Martin, in his former TV show "Keep those letters coming".

Transition

All our members will be saddened to hear of the passing of Ron McDougal. Ron had a long and distinguished career in both the domestic and overseas services and was a veteran supporter of the Society.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1968: THE CANADA MANPOWER PERSPECTIVE

Bernard Brodie

In 1968 I had been an immigrant in Canada for just a few short months, having been landed on September 30th, 1967, off the P&O liner "Canberra" in Vancouver.

The fact that I became a Canada Manpower Centre Counsellor in Trail, B.C., only four months after arriving in the country is partly attributable to a long-gone set of rules whereby British immigrants had certain advantages in applying to the Canadian Public Service that other immigrants did not enjoy. The more direct reason was that the late Sixties were a time of high employment, and that qualified young Canadians could not be persuaded to leave the big cities for what they regarded as "hick" towns. When I accepted my job offer from Canada Manpower in late 1967, I was given a choice of thirteen towns and cities in the interior of British Columbia. All of them had vacancies for white-collar jobs with the Public Service: jobs that were well paid, carried health and pension plans, and offered a career open to the talents. A very different world from that which today's twenty-two year old graduates face!

In any case, January 13th, 1968, found me as a PM(D) with a young wife, driving into Trail, ready to start with the Government on January 15th at the Canada Manpower Centre at 835 Spokane St. My first CMC Manager was Len Willoughby, a very charming, distinguished Second World War veteran of the Canadian Army. One of his claims to fame was having been on duty as a uniformed bodyguard of Churchill, who had given him the last button off the greatcoat he was wearing when Len was

doing sentry-go at Chequers, as souvenir hunters had already stripped the coat of all but that last fastener! Len was a very decent man and made us feel at home.

There were ten employees in the Manpower Centre: a PM-4 manager, a PM-3 Senior Counsellor, six PM-2 Manpower Counsellors, a Clerk and a Secretary. Need I mention that all of the officers were male and both the support staff female? This was, after all, thirty years ago. We were obliged to wear shirts and ties to the office and we were not permitted to remove our jackets without permission. The office had been very excited the week before my arrival when they had received a new telex machine. They did not yet have a photocopier. The two typewriters were manuals. We had heavy, black, rotary dial telephones. The air was thick with smoke as most of the staff and many of the clients smoked. It was a very different world.

My mentor was another transplanted Englishman, Bert Avis, who was just about old enough to be my father. He had been in the Royal Air Force since before the War, served for the duration of the War, and afterwards had joined the British Post Office. Like many others, he found the winter of 1947 an intolerably trying experience: not a "home fit for heroes", but an England on short time, with everything rationed, bitterly cold weather, and gloomy prospects. He and his wife Helen determined to make a better life for themselves and emigrated to British Columbia. Bert was kindness itself to me: he took me under his wing and taught me a great deal about the Manpower Counsellor's work.

We may have been a tad isolated, but we were well up with the news, and followed with interest the Prague Spring and the emergence of Mr. Dubcek as a quasi-democratic leader. The thunder of Russian tanks grinding into the

streets of Prague came as a shock, but it was not immediately apparent that this would affect those of us on the West Coast of North America, half a world away.

It was not long after that we were informed of the activities of the department and the fact that Czech refugees would be coming to all parts of Canada. We were informed that in Trail we would receive some twenty-three families and several single people. One of the attractions of Trail from a settlement point of view was the presence there of Cominco, the huge mining and smelting company whose smelter and fertilizer factory dominated the town from its position on "the hill", as it was universally known. Also other large employers were within commuting distance, such as Celgar (Columbia Cellulose) at Castlegar. Cominco had expressed a willingness to hire suitable Czech refugees and assist them to achieve Canadian qualifications.

The inhabitants of Trail, a town of only some 11,000 souls, were the most warm-hearted and kindly folks that anyone could ever meet, as my wife and I had already discovered. No one could fail to be impressed by the enthusiasm with which the local citizenry set about their preparations for receipt of these families. Accommodations were arranged for the incoming families in local motels and hotels. Sponsors for each family were arranged from among the many who volunteered. Finally, the refugees began to arrive.

The normal method of arrival was for a small group to be deposited from the Greyhound Bus from Vancouver (eight hours away by road) at the Trail bus terminal at a very ungodly hour in the morning. We would go down to the terminal at 5:00 or 6:00 a.m. to greet the overnight bus from Vancouver. I often got chosen for this task for one very simple reason: although the most junior and least experienced

officer, I was the only person in the Trail Manpower office with even a smattering of another language (I had the English equivalent of Grade 13 in French and German). The Trail office personnel had many virtues, but the Gift of Tongues was not among them. Before my arrival, all telexes from Canada Manpower Centres in Quebec concerning employment opportunities had gone unanswered. This was not due to any anti-Quebec feeling in the office: they could not be responded to for the simple reason that not a single staff member could understand or translate them!

Among the younger Czechs who could speak a second language, that language was predominantly Russian, which none of us in the Manpower office spoke. However, among the older generation, there were many who had in the 1940's known the "pleasures" of contact with the occupying Germans, and many of them had retained some fluency in that language. I would arrive at the bus terminal clutching in my hand my Cassells German Dictionary (a school prize from my teens) and arrange for their breakfasts at the bus terminal restaurant, about the only place in town open at that hour. It was amazing how my German came back to me under the stress of necessity, and naturally the fact that the Czechs were eager to communicate with us made them tolerant and patient with my slowness. Top of the list of my memorized phrases was soon "Speck und Eier", better known as bacon and eggs, which seemed to hit the spot all round after a long night's bus ride.

Sometimes I was completely stumped by my guests' questions. One young man, Milan, who had some German from his University years, kept asking me where the "Dienstwagen" was. It took some hours before I ascertained that a dienstwagen was a "service-car". His question was elicited by his astonishment that a Government apparatchik such as I would be

driving his own car and not an "official" vehicle. Personally owned cars were something of a rarity in Czechoslovakia at that time: it was one of the many adjustments these people faced. Most of the Czechs were single persons and families who had had the good fortune to be out of Czechoslovakia when the axe fell. They were mostly an impressive lot. The families were mostly very solid and respectable, with the fathers eager to get to employment as swiftly as possible. The young single men were mostly of the technical and professional classes.

It soon became apparent that the others treated three of the older single men as "outsiders". One of the steady family men told me that these were, in the opinion of the majority, "undesirables" who had expressed no gratitude whatever for what the Canadian government had done for them, and had even smuggled some gold into the country that they were hoping to sell and profit from. I had no idea what truth lay behind these allegations, and I felt that the refugees were bringing a good deal of "baggage" with them: not the negotiable kind, but the psychological one.

Two kinds of training were necessary for these new potential Canadians: language training, and skills or technical training. My memory fails me as to the extent of the language training they received. However, I do vividly remember Bert and I leaving the office and taking many of the younger men to the town's main hardware store. There we would get them kitted out with those things they would need to carry out their trades: hard hats, construction boots, saws and hammers for the carpenters, pliers and screwdrivers for the electricians, and so forth. I was not trusted with the finances, and I think it was Bert who usually paid the bills, which I rather think were hurriedly paid from the imprest account, and then Regional Office reimbursed us. I also remember Bert's standard joke: he

would produce a single HB pencil from his shirt pocket, wave it in the air, and tell the youngsters how lucky he was that this was the only "tool of the trade" he needed to do *his* work!

In fact, the timing of these younger workers' arrival in our area was good. Cominco at that time was trying to rationalize its very varied workforce and replace many specific and compartmentalized trades with the more "jack of all trades" concept of the millwright. Many of these younger technically trained Czechs were destined to become millwrights "up the hill".

We had our occasional problems. One of the single men, in his mid-30s, locked himself in his room, refused to co-operate with us, and wrote long letters of complaint to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Manpower and Immigration about the way he was being treated. I will admit that at the time, knowing how hard we were working for them and how the people of Trail had pulled out all the stops in welcome and hospitality, my immediate reaction was one of anger at his behaviour. It is only with the passage of the years, and a few more hard knocks in my own life than I had experienced at the tender age of twenty-three, that I have come to realize the man was almost certainly clinically depressed by his recent life experiences. Certainly that was the view of the head of the West Kootenay Mental Health Council, who came to the man's rescue in a very compassionate way.

By now Len Willoughby had retired to Vancouver and our manager was Bruce King, another infantry veteran from the Canadian Army. Bruce liked to get us all the good publicity he could. When one of the Czech children became quite ill and was taken to Trail-Tadanac Hospital, it turned out that he had a

quite rare blood group. My colleague Bill Bell, then also a young PM (D) but now a deputy minister with the B.C. Government, gave the requisite blood, and then fainted and had to be hospitalized himself. Bruce was hell-bent to get an article in the Trail Times to the effect that Canada Manpower workers were so keen to do all they could for our new refugees that they were even giving up their own blood!

Fortunately, the hospital found out about his plans (courtesy of my then wife, who was a laboratory technologist there) and quite rightly killed the idea - which violated all concepts of confidentiality - stone dead.

As Christmas approached, in the knowledge that this would be a hard time to be so far from home in a new environment, the local people reached new heights of hospitality. Every Czech, whether single or in a family, had a welcome in a Canadian home for Christmas Day and Christmas Dinner, there were presents for the children, and the whole thing was most creditable to all concerned.

Our main interpreters at the office for the Czechs were a local couple originally from Czechoslovakia who were respected pillars of the community. Velen and Velenka Vanderlik had had traumatic but fascinating lives. Velen had been a Doctor of Law and a rising young man in Czechoslovakia when the War broke out. He fled the Nazis and joined the Free Czechs, with whom he fought until 1945. After the War he was appointed junior counsel for the Czech Government at the Nuremberg Trials, but then had had to flee again, this time from the Communists. Talking to Velen once, I had asked him why a man of his education was happy to spend his years as a teacher at the local high school, and this story came out. He had learned to prize the freedom and security that our tranquil little town offered and would not give it up for the world. His wife Velenka, who shared his views, was also a talented artist who

taught painting and arranged many of the local cultural events.

In the first few months, Velen and Velenka were invaluable as translators, but they suddenly stopped offering their services, and their reasons gave me an interesting insight into the different ways that different cultures think. One day, hurrying down the mountain road from Rossland to Trail to act as interpreters at the CMC, they had gone considerably over the speed limit and had incurred a speeding ticket. This they brought in to Bruce, with the request that he get it revoked. Bruce said that he could not do that. They argued that because they had been hurrying in order to do the authorities a favour, the authorities should recognize that and arrange for the ticket to be dropped. No amount of argument could make them see that we could not do this, and in somewhat of a huff they more or less withdrew their services. That was very sad, and an interesting example to me: after all those years in Canada, they still had a very European way of looking at the relationship between the individual and the state. But they were lovely and helpful people both, alas, no longer with us.

I left Trail for Ottawa in March of 1970. By that time the Czechs were well integrated into our community: those who wanted to work were working, as unemployment was not much of a problem for those with a strong will to work during those years. The "bad hats" had drifted away somewhere. The children had learned English with that astonishing speed which is so hard for adults to emulate, and many of them were already indistinguishable from their Canadian-born school-fellows.

It is always invidious to draw comparisons, but from my own personal contact with the Czechs I have to feel that this was, in general, one of the most successful and high-quality refugee movements of this century. I also feel that

much of the credit for the success of the movement goes to the efficiency of departmental officials both overseas and in Canada, many of whom went quite "above and beyond" to do what they could to help. However, I am equally sure that the greatest praise and credit should go to the ordinary decent citizens of towns and cities across the country who, perhaps reminded once more by the plight of these refugees of their own immense good fortune to have been born in Canada, opened their homes and hearts to the newcomers.

Immigration Reading

The New Poverty in Canada: Ethnic Groups and Ghetto Neighbourhoods

Abdolmohammad Kazemipur and Shiva S. Halli, University of Manitoba

192 pages (December, 1999)
Paper, ISBN 1-55077-108-6, \$24.95 Canadian (US\$19.95)

PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION: During the 1990s, a new surge of poverty struck the western industrial nations, including Canada. Slower economic growth both at national and international levels, globalization and the erosion of the welfare state contributed to this poverty surge. Moreover, there is a widespread perception that this poverty has become increasingly concentrated in certain neighbourhoods, known as "ghetto," "inner city," "poverty zone," etc., and that such neighbourhoods have become mostly the habitats of minority groups – racial minorities in some societies, immigrant groups in others. This path-breaking book examines the relationship between poverty and ethnicity in Canada.

The authors provide a comprehensive picture of Canadian cities with regard to the concentration of poverty and, in particular, examine whether there is an ethnic dimension associated with it. They find a disturbing trend towards rising poverty levels during the 1990s, with poverty tending to be concentrated in certain neighbourhoods. Also, certain ethnic groups, especially visible minorities and those consisting mostly of recent immigrants, seem to be doubly disadvantaged. They suffer not only from a general poverty due to economic factors but also factors related to their immigration status, such as limited knowledge of the official languages and the mismatch of their skills and the demands of the labour market.

The authors compare the Canadian experience with that of the US and European countries, examine various explanations, and make suggestions for policy-makers as to how to combat these disturbing trends.

Many immigrants Alberta-bound

By Michael Platt and Paul Cowan
Edmonton Sun, December 3, 1999

CALGARY -- Alberta's image as a cultural desert and redneck refuge could finally be left in the dust, thanks to a new report comparing Canada's top 25 cities.

When it comes to being cosmopolitan, it seems even the sophistication of old Montreal is lagging behind Edmonton and Calgary for attracting ethnic minorities and immigrants to settle down and stay awhile.

In fact, the Canada West Foundation report shows only Vancouver and Toronto have a larger percentage of visible minorities than Calgary's 15.6% and Edmonton's 13.5%.

"I'm not shocked at all - Calgary is a very rich and diverse city," said Mimosa Arienzo, spokesman for the Calgary Multicultural Centre. "When I came here a year ago, I was shocked to find out what a diverse place this is, but not now. People come here from all over the world."

While Alberta is fast becoming a cultural mosaic, other statistics show most immigrants have to arrive in Canada before they move to the province.

Only 6% of immigrants say they intended to move to Alberta when asked, while B.C., Ontario and Quebec top their lists of preferred provinces.

But once here, the Canada West study shows Calgary is attracting 28 newcomers for every 1,000 people already here - nearly double what its nearest rival, Toronto, can claim. Edmonton came fourth with 13.3 per 1,000, just behind Oshawa, Ont., with 13.4.

The average Albertan is 33.7 years old, the study shows. Edmonton had one of the youngest populations in the country with 36% of the population under the age of 25.

Since 1966 Edmonton's population has grown by 115%, compared with Calgary's 148.5% and Vancouver's 105%. Toronto grew 97.5% over the same period of time.

Edmonton reported 87.4 crimes for every 1,000 residents while Calgary had 78.1. Regina scored worst with 147.9 crimes per 1,000 and Vancouver reported 121.4.

Calgarians were the best paid in Western Canada with an average annual income of \$28,963, with Edmonton near the middle of the table nationally at \$25,728.

The average grocery bill in Edmonton was \$104 a week, compared with \$129.58 in Ottawa, the most expensive place surveyed, and \$94.10 in St. John, N.B., the cheapest.

The resale price of a house in Edmonton was \$111,587, while a house buyer in Vancouver would have to pay \$287,094.

A LATE NEWS FLASH.

After our Editor Del McKay left off this BULLETIN to be taken to the printers I cleared our P.O.Box and was delighted to receive a Xmas card to the Society from one of our long time LIFE members Roger St. Vincent who now resides in Ljubljana, Republic of Slovenia. Roger had some very kind words to say about the Society which I felt should be passed on. He also very kindly sent the Society a donation of \$50 which is gratefully received. Many thanks.

Alan Troy, Treasurer

I WISH THE PRESIDENT-TO-BE AND THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF THE CANADIAN IMMIGRATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONTINUED SUCCESS FOR THE YEAR 2000.

THERE ARE FEW IF ANY ORGANIZATIONS THAT OFFER MEMBERSHIPS FOR SUCH A SMALL FEE AND YET MANAGE TO PROVIDE ITS MEMBERS WITH ARTICLES OF SUCH PAST AND CURRENT INTEREST. IT IS ALSO MY HOPE THAT PAST AND PRESENT IMMIGRATION OFFICERS WILL SHOW AN INTEREST IN THE CHIS BY BECOMING MEMBERS IN Y2000.

*INTEREST

I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO STATE MY HIGH REGARD FOR THOSE WHO ENSURE CONTINUITY OF THE CHIS AND THE PUBLICATION OF THE BULLETIN BY VOLUNTEERING SO MUCH TIME AND EFFORT TO ITS SUCCESS.


ROGER ST. VINCENT

CANADIAN IMMIGRATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY

***Form for Initial Membership, Membership
Renewal, & Change of Address.***

Please note that the Membership Year runs from May 1 to April 30.

1) Please enter / renew my membership in the C. I. H. S.

Fee Attached \$ _ _ _ [Life Member (\$100) , Annual Member (\$10)]

Name:

2) Please fill out address etc. *only* if joining for the first time *or* if you wish to inform us of a change of address etc.

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

REMINDER RE 1999/2000 DUES.

Please note the 99/2000 fiscal year commenced May 1, 1999. Would members check the date on the right of their name on the mailing envelope or on their membership card and if it shows (9) or less this will mean this years membership dues would be appreciated as soon as is convenient. We have this problem every year mainly due to the odd dates of our financial year. Too bad we didnt go with calendar years from the beginning but whats done is done. In any case we would be glad have your cheque A.S.A.P. Thanks.

3) Please send this form with your cheque to:

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